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The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Security Council
Fifty-fifth year

Letter dated 19 December 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the statement made by Foreign Minister of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Abdul Sattar, with regard to the disastrous humanitarian consequences as a result of the resolution which is likely to be adopted today by the Security Council imposing additional sanctions on Afghanistan.

I should be grateful if this letter and its enclosure are circulated among the members of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Shamshad **Ahmad**

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Annex to the letter dated 19 December 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the Foreign Minister on Security Council sanctions proposed against Afghanistan

19 December 2000

The humanitarian tragedy in Afghanistan threatens to deepen as a consequence of United Nations sanctions proposed by the United States and the Russian Federation in the Security Council. Millions of innocent Afghans, already stricken by famine conditions owing to prolonged drought, will be exposed to starvation as United Nations aid agencies and non-governmental relief organizations withdraw their personnel from Afghanistan, warning that the sanctions will make their task difficult, if not impossible.

Contrary to the assertions by the sponsors of the draft resolution, impartial aid agencies and relief organizations operating inside Afghanistan are unanimously of the view that the additional sanctions will further aggravate the humanitarian crisis and as many as 1 million people will face the risk of death by starvation during Afghanistan's bitter winter and unprecedented drought conditions.

The incipient collapse of the international safety net in Afghanistan is forcing displacement and migration on innocent people. In 23 days up to 14 December, 32,177 Afghan refugees entered Pakistan. Daily reports point to accelerating influx. Apart from derailing the United Nations-sponsored negotiations between the Afghan parties which have raised hopes of peace, the additional sanctions envisaged in the draft resolution threaten to trigger a humanitarian disaster comparable to that which followed the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

The consequences of the ruthless military operations of the Soviet super-Power in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989, killing 1 million Afghans, forcing 5 million more to flee and devastating the infrastructure of the country, still haunt the Afghan people and affect stability in the region.

Of the 3.5 million Afghan refugees who entered Pakistan in the 1980s, about 2 million are still stranded in Pakistan. No other country in the world carries a heavier burden. With our resources strained, Pakistan cannot cope with the mounting burden.

Unless a major international effort is launched to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghans, creating a safety net against starvation, the world will be witnessing one of the gravest human tragedies of our times. Those pushing the sanctions that will force millions to emigrate or perish will bear responsibility before history for this avoidable disaster.

While abiding by the earlier Security Council sanctions under resolution 1267 (1999), Pakistan has invited the attention of the international community to the grave consequences for the Afghan people. Our fears have been borne out by the reports of several international humanitarian agencies, which have stated that these sanctions have stifled economic activity inside Afghanistan. New sanctions will compound the misery of the Afghan people.